1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

They must not enter the hut of a person dangerously ill ; this would hasten his death. People who are just recovering from a disease, when they walk about on the paths, must tie around their ankles the root called sungi, which will protect them against the perspiration or emanation left by married people in their footprints, because, as one of my informants said, "ba-ku-khila ba hisa," viz. married people are hot.

Moreover not only individuals but the whole social life would be endangered if sexual relations took place when the community itself is in a critical position. They are prohibited therefore in wartime, during the whole duration of hunting parties, and also during the marginal periods. Strange to say, this law does not apply so severely to unmarried boys and girls amusing themselves according to the "shigango" custom (p. 97). It seems that it is not the act in itself which is tabooed, but the act in as much as it is accomplished by regularly married people ; in this case only has it a bearing on the life of the community.

What is the reason of these prohibitions ? "Married people are hot." What does this aphorism mean ? The following rite may help us to understand it.

In the Maluleke country, when the whole population enters a lake to kill fish according to the tjeba custom (Part IV. Chap. I), a little boy and a little girl are chosen and laid down under a lion's skin, as if they were husband and wife, and told to remain very quiet during all the time the grown up people are fishing. Not knowing anything about sexual intercourse, they will obey ; then the fish also will keep quiet and will be killed easily. Why ? Because there is in the sexual act something wild, fierce, passionate which, according to the law of correspondance which is at the base of all Bantu magic, has an influence on the hostile forces ; these will be excited and more difficult to overcome : enemies in battle, the animals of the bush during hunting and fishing parties, disease, danger of contamination at death and during the marginal periods. Life is, so to speak accelerated by the sexual act, and this acceleration is communicated to the whole of Nature. Therefore : Keep quiet, be continent!

This profound conception of life also explains why so often certain actions must be accomplished by children, not yet able to have sexual relations, or by old women who no longer practise them.

Let us remark that all these rites do not belong to Animism, properly speaking, but to Dynamism (Part VI. Chap. I), which plays a part almost as important as Animism in Bantu primitive philosophy.

What is the connection between abnormal births of human beings and the rain-fall? I think it can be found in the conception of Heaven which has inspired so many curious rites, and which I shall explain in the next chapter. So it is possible that, after all, the mbelele rite has a religious idea at its base.

b) *Rain charms.*

The removal of the corpses of abnormal children from dry ground and their burial near the river probably sometimes proves ineffective to produce rain. So Bantu magicians have invented a great many charms to obtain the greatly desired showers, and the power of the rain-makers is enormous. Our tribe does not seem to have developed this art as much as others. The Sutho-Pedis are masters in this domain and Mankhelu, who had been taught by them and had become a great and renowned rain-maker, revealed all his secrets to me. He possessed the drug and used it frequently, he said, having often been called in by Sutho chiefs dwelling in far distant districts, as far off as Pretoria. He assured me that he had met with so much success that these chiefs had given him oxen, horses, a waggon, precious beads, etc.! Where had he found this marvellous drug? At Rivimbi (in Venda : Luvimbi), a country north of Spelonken, not far from the Limpopo and to which he went, as far as I could make out, in 1865 or 1866. The Luvimbi people are the descendants of Luvimbi, (1) a chief of the old times (as old as Nkuna, says Mankhelu) who, after his death, went to heaven and became king of heaven ; he still exists there as a spirit, hearing and knowing everything that is done on earth. This Luvimbi is probably the same whom the Vendas call the first man, and concerning whom they have a number of traditions which I shall mention a little later.

and those of still-born children or those who died at birth; to these they add their old rags (perhaps the cloths used for their menses?); they bring all these impurities to the cross-ways and *burn them* there, singing impure songs, saying: "To-day is a great day! There is no taboo any more! If you prohibit anything, it will be an insult to the rain; it will not fall." The smoke of all that they have burnt constitutes a religious offering: now the country will be pure and the rain will fall. The conception prevailing among the Malulekes is somewhat different from that of the Rongas.

(1) I have published an account of the Venda traditions connected with Luvimbi or Raluvimbi in *The S. A Journal of Science*, April 1921, where more details will be found concerning this personage.

774 771 Having traced the broad lines of our classification let us now see how far the Thonga conceptions are animistic, animatic or dynamistic.

1) Individual ideas.

In a certain year, the *mintjhopfa* trees (p. 19) did not bear fruit. A Rikatla boy, named Zinyao, took a stick and walked through the bush, belabouring all the ntjhopfa shrubs, scolding them because they had not done their duty. An ethnographer, anxious to penetrate into the mysteries of primitive souls, might infer from this fact that Thongas believe in the personality of trees, and that each tree possesses a spirit; this would however be absolutely false. Zinyao was doing the same thing as a little boy who hits the table against which he has knocked his head, or as a little girl who breaks her doll because she is angry with it. The same boy, who was evidently endowed with a strongly animistic tendency, once saw a big moth fall to the ground; a hen at once ran towards it and devoured it. Zinyao watched very attentively, and I heard him muttering to himself: "The Son-of-Moth goes to the Son-of-Hen, yonder, and asks him to pay a fine, because, says he, I have been eaten by you there on the earth." If this reflection were taken seriously, it would mean that, to the Thonga mind, each animal has a soul which continues to exist after death, and even that wrongs done to an animal during its earthly life must be repaired in the after world. This conclusion would be absolutely erroneous. No one seriously believes in a continued existence of animals after death; and, as to a final judgment, there is no idea of it, even as regards human beings, who are believed to be immortal! These were the *personal views* of Zinyao.

I would place in the same category the description of the fight between the moon and the sun, as given by Spoon (p. 307). The same informant on another occasion gave me an eloquent and graphic account of the battle of the water near the lake of Rikatla, when the rain has been falling for many days: "In the hollow there is a papyrus marsh which becomes filled with water; at a quarter of an hour's distance the lake itself is swollen by the rain; there is a canal which joins marsh and lake; so the waters flow into that canal from both sides; they meet in the middle and fight: but the water from the papyrus marsh comes with greater force, and after a while it overcomes the other current and makes its way triumphantly to the lake!" These individual ideas are either animatic (idea of trees, of sun and moon, of water,

lightning), or animistic (Son-of-the-Moth). But they are not of much importance. They belong to the same category as the description given by the Psalmist of the sun as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, or to that of Homer comparing the break of the day to a young damsel with rosy fingers. This is poetry, mere personification of natural objects, or forces, and not beliefs. The poetical tendency is very marked amongst primitive races. It may be that ideas of this kind were more firmly held in former times, if the tribe has really passed through a more mythological phase, a hypothesis for which there are some grounds.

2) Collective beliefs.

The beliefs of the Thongas which deserve to be called by that name because they are universal and express themselves in important rites and customs, are the following :

1. The human soul continues its existence after death, when it is endowed with new powers which make it an object of awe and fear. *The spirits of the ancestors* are the main objects of religious worship. They form the principal category of spirits (psikwembu).

2. Although the spirits of the departed generally have nothing to do with people other than their descendants, some of them, especially *those belonging to foreign tribes*, can take possession of living men and cause troubles which must be cured by a process of exorcism. This is the second category of spirits.

3. Some individuals have the power of magically unsheathing themselves during the night, and their spirit goes out to torment, or to kill and eat other people. These are *the wizards* (baloyi) ; this third category of spirits accomplish their wicked deeds when separated from the body, but their body is still living and they re-enter it. These three beliefs are distinctly animistic.

4. There is in man, and in a few large animals, a semi-spiritual principle, the *nuru*, which escapes from the body when the individual is killed in war, or in hunting, and through which the dead man, or animal, avenges himself or itself on the murderer. What is the relation between the nuru and the shadow (sitjhuti)? This is not stated. The nuru seems to be of a more material nature, as it can enter a root, and it remains attached to the corpse and the bones of the person or animal killed. This category of spiritual enemies, probably invented under the influence of fear and remorse, has no connection with ordinary people,

771 and only troubles those who have killed, rendering them, as is generally
774 believed, insane. — The nuru belief seems to be a compromise between
828 Animism and Dynamism. (See p. 77-80.)

5. There are in plants, animals, stones, hidden virtues which can be
789 either useful or harmful to man. Medicine-men (tinanga) possess a more or less esoteric knowledge of such, and magicians (bangoma), endowed with special powers, can acquire a control over these virtues and use them in medical art, or in magic. — This is true Dynamism.

6. Certain natural objects, such as the sea, the bush fire, are sometimes vaguely personified. — This is Animatism.

772 7. But above them all is Heaven, Tilo, which is sometimes looked on as a real being, sometimes as an impersonal power, a number of mysterious superstitions finding their explanation in this strange and perhaps obsolete notion of Heaven. — This is more than Animatism and seems to be a vague theistic, even monotheistic, idea.

771 The essential difference between Animism and Dynamism seems to
774 me clear. But it is by no means absolute. We shall often meet with rites which belong to both domains, or bear an intermediate character. In the following chapters the exact nature and influence of these various kinds of spirits and impersonal forces will be studied, and I hope that an explanation of all the facts concerning them will throw more light on the subject and show that, at any rate, Thonga Animism is very different from the Animism of the Dutch East Indies, for instance, where men speak of thousands of spirits of the earth, air, water, mountains and trees ; very different also from the fetichism met with in other Bantu tribes of Central and Western Africa.

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82 Before leaving this chapter, in which I have tried to sketch what I have
789 called by the rather pretentious term of The Natural Philosophy of the Bantus, and as a preparation for the explanation of the religious and dynamistic rites described in the following chapters, I think it advisable to set forth the principles which seem to underlie most of these rites, and which may be called the *axioms of primitive mentality*.

As regards what are commonly called *magic rites* I contend that they are in no sense purely arbitrary but that they rest on certain definite principles. These axioms of primitive mentality are what anthropologists fittingly call collective representations, viz., everybody believes

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CHAPTER II

RELIGION.

About the end of the XVIIIth century, a Portuguese military commander visited the Bay, and, after having spent a year and eight months in the country, sent to the Prelate of Mozambique a very curious report on the cultivation, trade and civilisation of the land (p. 141). The following sentence is found in his report : — "All the inhabitants are Hottentots, and have no religion." That he should have had erroneous ideas concerning the distinction between Bantu and Hottentot tribes is but natural ; the ethnology of South Africa was not yet known. But that, after such a long sojourn amongst the Natives, he should have declared that these people had no religion seems indeed strange! I can, however, understand the error, and excuse it. Amongst the Thongas there are no temples, no special day set apart for worship, no priest class, in fact, nothing external to attract attention to their religion. Even if he had been present at any of the religious ceremonies, the visitor might very well have mistaken them for ordinary family gatherings, as he would not have noticed anything like religious awe in the offering of the sacrifice, stolen by the *batukulu* (I. p. 162), in the prayer cut short amidst laughter, or in the songs, which would be of the usual type, perhaps even of a somewhat obscene character. Yet, notwithstanding all this, how real is the *Ancestrolatry*, the Religion of the Thongas, of, in fact, all the South African Bantus! How frequent and manifold are its manifestations! This is *the first, and most perceptible of their religious intuitions*, and any European who has stayed in their villages, learnt their language, and tried to understand their customs, will have had an opportunity of familiarizing himself with this religion. But there is a *second set of religious intuitions*, less

771 easy to perceive. In the quartz of the South African veldt, miners, in their investigations, sometimes strike a reef : they crush the hard stone, wash it, apply to it certain chemical tests and find there is gold in the reef. This is similar to an experience which I once had when conversing with Thonga natives. Quite unexpectedly I heard them speaking of *Heaven*, not as a kind of impersonal being, but as a king, endowed with great power and omniscience, who must be feared by thieves, because he knows them. Persevering in my inquiries, I discovered this second set of religious intuitions, quite distinct from the first, viz., the *Deistic Conception of Heaven*. I intend now to describe these two parts of the Thonga religious system. Later on we may discuss their relation to each other. "System" is perhaps too big a word, for no Native philosopher or theologian has ever classified this somewhat confused mass of religious ideas, and we must not look for anything logical and organic. We may even meet with contradictions, conflicting statements... While trying to bring some order into the subject, I will endeavour at the same time to give a faithful and reverent explanation of Native ideas.[1]

A. ANCESTROLATRY.

I. *The Ancestor-Gods (Psikwembu).*

1) The name of the ancestor-gods.

769 776 193 Any man who has departed this earthly life, becomes a *shikwembu*, a god. We shall show, later on, that to translate "shikwembu" by god (with a small "g") is by no means incorrect. The word is indeed interesting, but unhappily no light is thrown on it by etymology. It belongs to the shi-psi class, the class of instruments. Take the verb "famba" to walk ; put the prefix "shi" in front of it, and change the final "a" into "o" and you obtain "shifambo" — "the thing with which one walks!" So shikwembu would mean "the thing with which one *kwemba*." Only this

[1] [For complete discussion of Thonga religion, see pp. 372-450, category 116.-- Analyst]

encroach upon the right of the *regular priest*, which is a great taboo ; secondly, they kill a man who loses all restraint in sexual relations ; when any one yields to that sin, people say : "The gods will lead him into the thick bush and kill him there." To other sins they are quite indifferent. Mboza even asserted, with a sadness which reminded me of the complaints of Asaph in Ps. LXXII, that men of bad habits do not fall ill or meet with misfortune ; the cough only attacks the good ; wizards bewitch them and do not go to the bad fellows, "for the gods see that they are not worth anything!"

In conclusion, I should say that what is wanting in the conception of the ancestor-gods, as compared with the God of higher religions, is both transcendence and the moral attributes.

III. *General Characteristics of Ancestrolatry.*

If I had to characterise Thonga ancestrolatry, I would say :

It is a *spiritualistic* religion, in the sense that no idols are adored ; there is neither idolatry nor fetichism in it. Spirits and spirits alone are worshipped.

It is an *animistic* religion, as defined in the preceding chapter, the categories of spirit gods being numerous, and these spirits being worshipped in order to win their favour, and propitiated when they are angry.

Though consisting essentially of offerings and prayers, which are distinctly religious acts, *it is mingled with magic* to a considerable extent.

It is a *particularistic family* religion, each family having its own particular gods. We may also see in it the beginings of a *particularistic national* religion (the great mhamba).

It is a *social* religion, its prescriptions being aimed at keeping alive and strengthening the hierarchy, which is the main feature of the social order.

It is an *unsacerdotal* religion, there being no sacerdotal order, but at the same time the priesthood of the elder brother is strictly enforced.

It is a *non-moral* religion, by which I do not mean that it is *immoral*, i. e. opposed to the laws of morality, but that it has no, or at least very

little, connection with the moral conduct of the individual. It has no moral prescriptions except those which insure the observance of the hierarchical order in the family. It neither promises reward nor threatens punishment after death. 771

Consequently it is purely *eudemonistic*, the religious ceremonies having as their sole aim material benefits connected with the terrestrial life, e. g. abundance, health, peace, and good sleep!

It is *unphilosophical*, that is to say, it does not attempt to answer the great problems about the origin and purpose of the world and human existence. These questions of causality and finality are absolutely beyond its horizon.

It is essentially *ritualistic*, and leaves very little place for true religious feeling. Adoration is practically non-existent. However, elements of *personal religion* are not altogether wanting. Some expressions in the liturgical prayers reveal humility and trust, e. g. "Death doth not come to the man who is prayed for, but only to the one who trusts in his own strength" (p. 393); thankfulness for escape from danger is sometimes expressed in a spontaneous and genuine way; and may not also the sacrifice of bitterness (p. 391) be actuated by a real and touching feeling of dependency; the old formula of invocation and the sacramental word *tsu*, now inexplicable, seem to show that there was, even in former times, such a thing as *self dedication*, and some aspiration towards a real communion between the worshipper and his gods. (See Appendix III on Personal Religion amongst Thongas.)

Animism is generally spoken of as a *religion of fear*. Applied to Thonga ancestrolatry, this statement would be an exaggeration. There is indeed no deep love for the ancestor-gods in the hearts of the Thongas; how could it be so when these "psikwembu" are so jealous, and show so little love themselves? But there is no perpetual fear. The attitude is rather that of *indifference*. Natives ask for one thing only: that they may live in peace, and that their gods may interfere with them as little as possible.

B. THE CONCEPTION OF HEAVEN.

When studying the classic tragedies of Greece, and more especially those of Aeschylus and Sophocles, one is led to the conclusion that the gods of Olympus, in whom may be recognised, more or less distinctly, the personification of the forces of Nature, 771 772

or heroes glorified by apotheosis, were not the only beings in whom that intellectually gifted people believed, nor the sole objects of their veneration. Higher than Olympus, and dwelling in the more remote heavens, a mysterious divinity looks down upon mankind, a divinity wiser and nobler than the capricious Zeus, or the voluptuous Artemis ; sometimes this being is called Nemesis, the avenger, inexorable fate, and sometimes it is a god more human and more moral in character. But this Supreme Being is vaguely conceived, and its form is, as it were, closely veiled, In the religion of the Thongas we meet with a similar phenomenon. Above the gods whom the common people know, worship, and call by name, there exists a power which to the majority remains ill-defined and which they express by the word *Heaven* (Tilo). This word *Tilo*, which, in the ordinary language, is used to designate the blue sky (p. 304), contains a far deeper and more comprehensive meaning. I shall not attempt to throw complete light on these ideas, which are so dim in the Native mind. But the reader who studies carefully the facts and customs which I am just about to describe, will certainly be convinced that there really exist two parallel series of religious ideas in the Thonga Religion. We have already dealt with those which first manifest themselves to the observer. Let us now consider the others ; they are not less interesting, nor less picturesque ; they are indeed perhaps deeper than those of the ordinary Ancestrolatry. This belief is in such an embryonic state that it very easily escapes observation. As already pointed out, it is a vein, a reef of gold, which has been discovered through some fortuitous circumstance, and must be worked with great care.

I. *The definition of Heaven.*

Tilo is a grand word ; it comes from the same root as *Zulu*, the honoured name of a great and powerful tribe.

"Before you came to teach us that there is an All-Good Being, a Father in Heaven, we already knew there was a Heaven, but did not know there was anyone in it." Such was the declaration

"Balungwana ba tlanga henhla" — "The balungwana are at play up there." Or it is they who are singing in heaven when there is a prolonged roar of thunder, saying : "wuwu-wuwu!" 772 776 821

When some one passes along the road, they dispute up above as to who he may be. One says : "It is so and so," and the others contradict him. Then they spit on the traveller, who is quite astonished to see some saliva on his hand. He mistakes it for rain, and looks up to the sky to see where the rain is coming from. The balungwana then have a chance to see his face, and the one who has guessed rightly says to the others : "You see! I was right."

In Bilen I heard of a man who prevented children from picking the beautiful red flowers of Tecoma capensis, telling them that the balungwana wanted them for dresses. The same individual believed that these little men would bring oxen to him. 772 776

The Rongas say that a little man fell on the hill of Lourenço Marques, near the house of Sithini, the son of Mashaken, just before the famous war between Mozila and Mawewe (I. p. 28), the rival claimants to the kingdom of Gaza, and that this dwarf came as a presage of the troubles which were to follow. "Lots of folk saw him" said Charlie in 1895 ; (he was then a man of some forty years of age). "We were too young to be allowed to look at him ; the Whites took him and carried him off to Mozambique." — Heaven is therefore inhabited. This is generally admitted, but the idea, from all that one can gather, remains very vague.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THONGA RELIGION.

I. *The Origin of the Conception of Heaven.*

Ancestrolatry forms a clear, well-defined religion, with its theology (i. e., the ideas as regards the psikwembu), its sacrifices, and its prayers. The dim, mysterious ideas about Heaven, incorporated in or rather lying behind some of the most extraordinary rites of the tribe, bear a very different character. There is something incoherent, vague and 771 772 776 171

771 unexpected in them, and it would seem that, bearing as they do an
772 essentially deistic character, and accompanied by no true worship, they
776 might as well be absent from the horizon of the Thonga mind.

171 However, when we study other Bantu tribes, we come to exactly the opposite conclusion, i. e., that it would be indeed strange if no religious ideas of this kind were found amongst our tribe. In fact, this occurrence of a double set of religious ideas is universal amongst Bantus. They all believe in a kind of Supreme Being, an All-Father, who bears many different names, *Nzame* amongst the Fan and a great number of West African tribes, *Nyambe* amongst the Ba-Rotsi, *Leza* in some Zambezi and Rhodesian districts, *Mulungu* amongst fifteen East African tribes (1), *Unkulunkulu* in Zululand, *Nungungulu* round Inhambane, and *Mudimo* amongst the Ba-Sutho, etc., etc. The Thonga *Tilo* is, most likely, one of these names. The word probably comes from the root *ulu*, high, elevated, and *ilu*, heaven, which the Rev. P. Sacleux has found with that meaning amongst Central or West African tribes. (*Mulu*, amongst the Bembas ; *Liulu*, in Kimbundu ; *Diulu*, in Luba ; *Wilu*, in Luyi ; *Egulu* in Ganda ; *Idjulu*, amongst the Tongas of Zambezi, etc.). This root, with the personal prefix, has given birth to the term *Mugulu*, designating God in Tabwa and *Mukuru* in Herero. It may be that Mukuru is rather related to the *Unkulunkulu* of the Zulus, the Great One. (See Mgr. Le Roy, "La Religion des Primitifs," 1909, p. 498.)

In the South African tribes, however, the conception of the Supreme Being is not nearly so precise as in most parts of Central Africa. The Thonga Tilo, although sometimes invoked, is hardly a being, but seems rather to be a personification of Nature. Is this the original conception of the Supreme Being, or is it rather a transformation of this? I abstained, in *Les Ba-Ronga*, from expressing any definite opinion on this point. Further study has now led me to believe that the latter conclusion is the more probable, and that ideas concerning Heaven were more definite in former times. This, at any rate, is also the conviction of intelligent elderly Natives, who are able to remember the former ideas held by the tribe. They say : "As regards death, people now commonly affirm that it is caused by witchcraft, whilst formerly they attributed it to the agency of Heaven." Let us also notice the name of the dwarfs who are believed to inhabit Heaven, the *balungwana*. This word is a

(1) Comp. J. Torrend's *Comparative Grammar of the S. A. Bantu Languages*, p. 68.

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

diminutive of *Mulungu*, *balungu*, by which are designated, amongst the Zulus and Thongas, White people of every description, whether Europeans or Asiatics. Could the inhabitants of Heaven have been called "balungwana," on account of their resemblance to the Whites? It would hardly seem probable, for the name of the balungwana, and the ideas connected with them, were in existence long before White people were generally known, or had settled in the country. It is much more reasonable to suppose that the name of these mythical beings, as also that by which the Whites are designated, is a derivative of some other pre-existent term ; and what should this be if not the famous vocable "Mulungu," which stands for God, the One Supreme God, in so many of the Bantu dialects of East Africa, from Lake Victoria Nyanza to the Zambesi, to Senna and Quilimane? I should be inclined to think that the tribes in the neighbourhood of Delagoa were also acquainted with this name, which is so widely known, and that it has, in the course of centuries, disappeared from their theology, only leaving, as a last trace, the term balungwana, applied to the heavenly beings who occasionally descend to earth, and balungu, designating that superior race whose wisdom has always impressed the Blacks as supernatural. If this hypothesis were confirmed, we should have the right to conclude that the idea of Heaven, such as it is described in this chapter, is the disfigured remnant of a higher and monotheistic conception, held by the primitive Bantus before their dispersion, which has evolved in various ways amongst the different tribes.

II. *The Antiquity of Ancestrolatry.*

Ancestor Worship seems, on the other hand, to be an extremely ancient religion amongst mankind. There have been discovered of late years sepulchres of prehistoric date, which seem to show that the funeral rites of the first races were very similar to those practised by the Bantus of the present day. In comparing the burial of Sokis (I. p. 139) with that of a human being of the Mousterian age, whose remains were recently discovered by Hauser in the celebrated "Abri du Moustier" (Dordogne) (1) I noticed the following resemblances :

(1) See my paper "Deux enterrements à 20,000 ans de distance." *Anthropos*, 1900, I. v. Comp. also *L'homme préhistorique*. January, 1909.

787 825 *timpfu*, a non-castrated ram : the sons of the royal family, the *sòyevelɛ*! (bana ba-ku-psalwa). 3) Another *Shikwela*, astragalus of the ram sacrified during the Sikororo war, the one whose psanyi was used for the sprinkling of the Nkuna army ; it designates the enemy, and is watched with special attention when casting the bones in connection with military affairs. 4) *Noni wa timpfu*, an old sheep, the widow of the chief. 5) *Nhombela ya timpfu*, a young sheep, the girls of the royal family. As regards the wife of the chief, she is represented by the astragalus of the female mhala antelope.

787 771 771 In one of his sets of bones Mankhelu also had two objects taken *from an ox*. One was an oval-shaped smooth bone, two inches long, the other, one of its hoofs decorated on one of its three sides with triangular marks (See plate). Both represent the *Nkuna* tribe, whose totem is the buffalo. (Comp. I. p. 364.) But this is a custom borrowed from the Sutho-Pedis. I never saw bones corresponding to totems used in Thonga divination ; the idea of totem is altogether absent from the minds of the Thongas when not influenced by their Pedi neighbours.

787 825 In addition to those of the domestic animals, there are a number of astragalus, or other bones, taken from *wild animals*.

First from *antelopes* : the male *mhala, tsombe ra mhala*, means the chief, and the female mhala, his wife ; the male mhunti, *tsombe ra mhunti, mhunti ya matlhari*, the duiker of the weapons, means fighting men, and the female mhunti, called *mbiri*, means women of loose character : *mbiri ya ku tola, ñwashifamba ni mafura eku rimen*, the woman who smears herself with grease and ochre, even when she goes to her field (thus trying to attract the attention of men). The *nhlangu* (reed buck), wandering about during the night, means wizards, as these cast their spells by night. Mankhelu had only the astragalus of the female in his set. The *mbalala* antelope dwells in the forest ; it does not like to come out in the plains ; its astragalus therefore designates the chief who rests in his hut and does not expose himself to the toil and the heat of the day.

The astragalus of the *ngolube ya ku dya marambo, yi tjela mitshi yi ralarala, yi languta hi matlhelo*, the wild boar which eats bones,

APPENDIX V (See p. 536).

The Murimi Movement, an attempt on the part of the Thonga Tribe to get rid of witchcraft.

In the year 1913 (or 1914) the members of one of the Hlengwe clans living near the Sabie River, in the extreme north of the Thonga territory, seeing that the crops were bad, game wanting, and that even honey was scarce, contributed each of them a small sum of money, collected £ 10 and sent messengers to Myali, the Kalanga god who dwells in a cave in Machonaland, in order to regain prosperity. They were well received by the priests of Myali, who introduced them to the god they serve. They had to pass through a tunnel, with a big rock hanging over their heads. On the other side of this tunnel there was a kind of amphitheatre of rocks, enclosing a very clean and well-swept space. A voice from the rocks above greeted them in Zulu : "Good morning, my children", and they were given a pouch full of tobacco with the following instructions : "When you reach your home, take a snuff of this tobacco ; then go to your gardens, blow your noses and spread the nasal mucus in the soil ; henceforth you will have abundant harvests." The Hlengwe messengers returned home and began to use the precious drug, but this tobacco of Murimi, as it was called, had a marvellous fate. It found purchasers throughout the Thonga tribe, and during four years all the Thonga clans performed the new rite, the rite of Murimi, in the conviction that a new era had set in in which there would be no more famine and in which witchcraft, that great enemy of humanity, which causes disease, robs, and kills, would be expelled for ever.

Who is this Myali? He is the same personage who is called Ñwali in other parts of the country, the same also as Ra-Luvimbi, the god of the Ba-Venda, to whom they pray to obtain rain (See p. 321). His sacred cave is in the Matoppo hills, in the midst of that extraordinary desert of rocks in which Cecil Rhodes chose the spot for his grave, some fifteen miles further south. Mr Eliott, who was Native Commissioner in this region, told me that the description of the cave given above was exact. I will not discuss here the origin of the cult of Myali, called also Mlimo, a term probably corresponding to the Sutho Modimo, which would seem to have been transformed into Murimi when it was adopted by the Thongas. This is a most interesting subject to which I would draw the attention of our Rhodesian colleagues. Myali has med-

754 iums, consecrated girls (bampouka) set apart from their youth to be-
776 come the wives of his priests ; the rite of the magical tobacco, which is
771 a fecundation rite, is unknown in South African ancestrolatry. Every-
thing would appear to suggest that this cult is of foreign origin. A fact which is worthy of special notice is this : *Myali is the enemy of wizards.* If anyone guilty of witchcraft approaches his cave, he will be struck dead, and his priests will have nothing to do with witchcraft cases.

I cannot explain in detail how the new cult spread from the Hlengwe country down to the Maputju region, thus creating in the Thonga tribe a unity which has but seldom been attained. Certain individuals appear to have availed themselves of the new belief to do a profitable piece of business. They bought a part of the original tobacco of Murimi, mixed it with ordinary tobacco and went to the chiefs offering to let their subjects snuff the miraculous drug. I happened to meet one of these prophets of Murimi, who also called himself Murimi and who had been arrested by the Portuguese Administrator of Morakwen, as the Authorities seem to have feared at a certain moment that the agitation caused by this movement might have a political character. This particular Murimi appeared to be a very simple type of man. He was half lame, his arms were crooked, and he told me that his reason for fighting the wizards was that it was they who had reduced him to that miserable condition ; he was convinced that his efforts to combat them were very beneficial to the country. But notwithstanding these altruistic inclinations, he did not neglect his own interests ; anyone admitted to snuff the tobacco had to give the chief a fowl or a "nkinyenta", i. e. 500 reis, then of the value of I s. 6d, and Murimi received a considerable share of the fee.

Wonderful rumours preceded the distributor of tobacco. It was said that he had been emprisoned by one of the Administrators, further north, but had suffered nothing through this infringement of his liberty; the following night he had been miraculously transported to the bed of the Commandant, whilst the latter had taken his place in the gaol! He was now approaching the town of Lourenço Marques in the form of a gigantic dragon before whom everyone fled!

754 The following is the description of the manner in which the Murimi
771 rite was performed in the Matalane region, some 15 miles north of Lourenço Marques. The chief Magebeza summons all his subjects to assemble early in the morning in a forest (Sept. 1916). His counsellors are present and bring with them the lame prophet holding in his hands a sala shell containing the tobacco. A woman comes and, kneels down in front of him; she holds out her open hand, palm upwards. Murimi takes

hold of one of the fingers in order that the hand may remain well open, pours a little tobacco into it and asks: "Are you a witch?" She answers: "No!" — "Then," says the prophet, "snuff!" The woman draws up all the precious tobacco into her nose, taking care not to let the least particle fall on the ground. If she carries a baby on her back, she puts a little of the powder into his nostrils, and if she is pregnant, she rubs her hypogastrium on both sides with the drug in order to "let the child who is inside snuff." Another woman comes; she answers in a hesitating manner, which does not escape the prophet; she may go so far as to say: "I do not know; perhaps I am a witch". Murimi looks at her with terrible eyes: "Take care," he says, "cast away your witchcraft immediately. If you do not do so, this goat's skin in which you are carrying your child will come to life again and belabour your breasts with its hoofs! And the day you begin to cast your spells again, you will be split in two (handjuka hi le makari)!" The worst case is when a woman who is a witch accepts the tobacco without confessing her evil deeds. Then, such was the rumour, the tobacco poured into her hand would suddenly increase in quantity, and upon that sign, Murimi would give her hand a blow from beneath, throwing all the tobacco over her shoulder, and the woman would fall to the ground unable to get up again and on the point of splitting in two.

When all the subjects had passed through the trial, Ndonga, one of the counsellors, addressed the throng in these words: "Now witchcraft is destroyed! You have all cast it far away. But let it not come back again. If any of you has *tsipoko* (pl. of shipoko, p. 488) kill them, cut them in pieces with your axes or with your big knives, and let them not come back, because, if they do so, it would be a great calamity for you. They would beg you: 'Mother! give me something to eat' and if you should do so, you would die" He added: "A new era has begun. You have no longer anything to fear from wizards. If one of them approaches you to bewitch you, he will immediately split in two. Murimi has cut off the wings of the baloyi. They will not be able to come to do harm to you during the night. Henceforth we are free from the calamities which caused us to suffer so greatly."

This is the first part of the rite, which aims at destroying witchcraft for ever. But it has also a second aim, the bringing in of a new prosperity, a golden age in which everyone will have plenty to eat, in which even, according to some, death will no longer exist. The second part of the rite is connected with this great hope.

Whilst Murimi proceeded with the examination of the people, another

754 771 counsellor, Phayindi, was preparing "the leaves"; these are the large bracts protecting mealie-cobs which he has torn from the stem and in the centre of which he has placed a little of the tobacco. These are now lying on the ground, and each woman must go to fetch one and return home with her husband. Keeping silent all the while, she takes a little pot full of water, pours a little of the drug into it and carries it to the threshold of the hut, where both husband and wife wash their hands and feet. She must not enter the hut herself; the husband enters, and carefully places the pot in the back part of the hut. The woman then sets out for her gardens, carrying the leaf. She follows the boundaries of each field, digging in the ground here and there, throws into the hole a little mucus from her nose, which is still full of the tobacco, and covers it with earth. She keeps to the end the largest field, in which there may be a-nkuhlu tree (p. 18), the mafureira tree which is apparently preferred by Murimi. She digs a little hole at the foot of this tree and buries the leaf in it, in such a way that only the middle of the leaf which contains the tobacco will be covered with earth; both ends will remain visible. Thus the fields are "fattened (nonisa)" for ever. But if the mistress of the field should again begin to practise witchcraft, the leaf will come out of the soil and fly up to the chief's village, where the guilty woman will have to redeem it by paying a fine of £ 1.. Having finished performing the fecundation rite, the woman claps her hands and says: "Murimi! I ask thee to help me here in my gardens in order that I may have a plentiful harvest and become fat!". She then returns home, and leans her hoe against the sacred tree of the village. Her husband, who has waited for her, again washes her feet with the lustral water and the injunction of silence is removed.

These are the rites of the first day. But now begins a sacred period which lasts from ten to fifteen days, and is marked by three strong taboos. The labour taboo; no work is allowed in the fields until agricultural occupations are resumed by the collective tilling of the chief's field. The sexual taboo; at the end of the period the great wife will smear her hut with clay and have relations with her husband the following night; next day the other women will do the same, but woe to the one who should precede the great wife (I p. 324). The travelling taboo; travelling is forbidden during these days and everyone must stay at home till the chief has cancelled the prohibition by himself undertaking a journey.

This is still not the end. Those who have snuffed the tobacco of

Murimi constitute in some sort a new humanity; they have been *initiated* into a new life; they must abstain from relations with those who do not belong to their society, and observe peculiar rules which will distinguish them from the uninitiated. If a man has not snuffed whilst his wife has done so, she must not allow him to have conjugal relations with her; if he was away from the country when Murimi passed, the husband must go to the capital and snuff there, a little of the tobacco having been preserved for those who were absent. He will be subject to the law of silence until he has ritually washed his hands and feet. (This is a form of the kunga rite as observed in the initiation ceremonies. (See I, p. 124.) If strangers pass through the village, no food will be offered to them unless they have snuffed, at any rate no food coming from the fields which have been "treated (daha)" with the drug. The following are some of the taboos regulating the life of the initiated. Language taboos: the word *fole*, which means tobacco, must only be used to designate the tobacco of Murimi; ordinary tobacco must be called by a new word, *shilandi*. The word *mpfula*, rain, is prohibited and must be replaced by *magayisa*, (which means a party of boys going to work). Alimentary taboos: no special food is prohibited, but certain articles of diet must be eaten according to new rules. This is particularly the case for the fruit of the nsala tree (p. 16). The shell must be broken in such a way that it forms two halves; the eater must lie on his belly, place the upper half of the shell on the soil, suck out the pulp round the stones to his heart's content and put all the stones back into the first half of the shell; when he has finished, he must place the second half over the first and deposit the fruit thus reconstituted at the foot of the tree, saying: "Murimi!" in order to show his gratefulness to his new god. If there are many ripe sala fruits on the stem, one must be left for Murimi. When digging sweet potatoes, sticks must be used rather than the hoe for the first ten days, during which tilling the ground with hoes is taboo; later on the hoe may be used, but one potato must be left in the earth as the share of Murimi. There are a number of other less important taboos to be observed; the stem of the cuscuta must not be employed to tie the bundle of dead wood gathered in the bush for fuel, because the cuscuta is the mat of Murimi. Certain kinds of snakes, the big Varan lizard, the tortoise and the small turtledove called shivambalane must not be killed. Should a hunter kill a shivambalane by mistake, he must place it on the branch of a tree, saying: "Murimi!". Above all, the initiated, the members of the new humanity, delivered from the fears of witchcraft by the all-powerful Murimi, must invoke him upon every

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754 occasion. At the conclusion of their speeches they pronounce his name.
Though no special offering is made except the sweet potato and the sala
● 771 fruit just referred to, and no special ceremony of worship is performed,
Murimi has clearly become the object of adoration of his devotees and
is much nearer their hearts and consciences than the ancestor-gods.

A year or two went by and the Thongas were obliged to confess that the produce of the fields in the meagre sand of their hills was not richer than in former years. People died just as before ; the great salvation which the worshippers of Murimi had expected did not come, and the tribe understood vaguely that it had been the victim of a gigantic hoax. At least when the question was put to the devotees of the new cult : "What about Murimi?" they smiled and did not answer a word, and very soon Murimi was forgotten.

754 It might be thought that this strange movement was the result of Euro-
771 pean influence ; it bears a strongly monotheistic character, and Murimi
776 is certainly very different from the ancestor-gods and from Tilo, Heaven, and much more akin to the Christian God. It must however be observed that very little information was given about this god, who was to a certain extent identified with his prophets, the latter being named Murimi as well as himself. But setting aside the small part played by Murimi, we are forced to recognise that the new rite is essentially and authentically Bantu. It is directly connected with witchcraft, the old Thonga animistic belief ; we have already met, in connection with the treatment of smallpox, with the idea of destroying witchcraft by means of a collective confession and repudiation (p. 465). The taboos accompanying the new rite are those we have everywhere found in the marginal periods or when an initiation was taking place. The Murimi Movement is thus a genuine creation of primitive Thonga mentality. Changes are taking place so rapidly that it is probably the last. I am glad therefore to have had an opportunity of witnessing it and of publishing the record of such an interesting event. Further details will be found in a paper which appeared in *Le Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*. 15 Décembre 1924. Paris.